MEREDITH FINCH • IG GUARA

ROSE™

image

12

The Story So Far...

In the land of Ttereve, magical ability is a death sentence.

Rose utilizes her newfound knowledge of her Guardian powers in her final moments with the Priests of Terra, and a softer side of her knight protector is revealed.

Struggling to control the bewitched Thorne, Drucilla once again sends out the Fallen, on the advice of her loyal nursemaid. But Dolora isn't as loyal as she appears, and the game for control of Ttereve may end up tearing the entire country apart.

The company of Will, Fel and Bjarke uncover shocking evidence of Drucilla's depravity, while Ila, Felix and Artus continue their hunt for Rose.

Lives will be changed forever in this next exciting chapter of ROSE.

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SING IT AGAIN!
"THE TOWN I LEFT WAS FILLED WITH DEAD, AND EVERYWHERE THESE QUEER RED FLIES CRAWLED UPON THE CORPSES' EYES, EATING THEM AWAY."
ZZZZZZZZZZZZ
DO YA THINK IT'S TRUE? DRUCILLA'S WIPIN' OUT WHOLE VILLAGES WHEN SOMEONE GETS A CASE O' THE SNIFFLES?
SHE MURDERED HER FATHER AND FOUGHT A WAR AGAINST HER TWIN BROTHER.
AFTER THAT, YOU GOTTA THINK THERE'S NOTHING SHE WOULDN'T DO.
SO WHA'S THE PLAN, WILL? YOU TAKE THE RIGHT, I TAKE THE LEFT, AN' WE MEET IN THE MIDDLE?

THE PLAN IS WE RESCUE ILA. PERIOD.
SO YER JUST GONNA LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT?
THEY MURDER AN ENTIRE VILLAGE OF PEOPLE AND YER GONNA LET THEM SIT THERE LAUGHIN' AND SINGIN' 'BOUT IT?!
BJARKE IS TAKING THE MOTHER AND HER SON SOMEWHERE SAFE. WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO?
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP DRUCILLA, AND KILLING A FEW SOLDIERS ISN'T GOING TO DO IT.
ARE YOU COMING, FEL?

NO. NO I AIN'T. AN' YOU SHOULDN'T BE NEITHER.
IF ILA WAS HERE, SHE'D BE ASHAMED OF YA.
THAT'S MORE LIKE DRUCILLA'S WAY O' THINKIN' THAN ANY FRIEND O' MINE.
ILA WAS ALWAYS SAYIN' THAT LIFE IS ABOUT MAKIN' CHOICES. WELL I'M CHOOSIN' TA GO DOWN THERE AND TEACH THOSE MURDERERS A LESSON.
THE WHOLE POINT O' THE RESISTANCE...O' WHAT WE WERE DOIN' WAS FOR THE PEOPLE. AN' NOW DRUCILLA'S GONE FROM BURNING VILLAGES TA BURNING INNOCENTS.
THIS WAR AIN'T WORTH WINNING IF YOU'RE WILLING T' SACRIFICE INNOCENTS T' DO IT.
'S FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING LEFT TA KNOW.
AND WHAT'S THAT?
DO YA WANT THE LEFT SIDE OR THE RIGHT?

REBELS! GET 'EM!
SWOOSH
FEL! SEVEN O'CLOCK!
GOT IT!
CLANG
THUNK
THIS IS WHAT I'M TALKIN' ABOUT!
LESS TALKING, MORE KILLING.
SPLITCH
THOOMP
NOW... LET'S GO FREE ILA.
NOT UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT THAT IS.

ILA, HOW EXACTLY IS IT THAT YOU KNOW WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE GOING?
I COULD TELL YOU, ARTUS, BUT I AM NOT SURE THAT YOU ARE READY FOR THE ANSWER.
I'M NOT SO SURE I'M READY FOR ANY OF THIS, BUT IT'S A LITTLE TOO LATE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT NOW.
EVENTS ARE MOVING MORE QUICKLY THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED. ROSE IS IN GRAVE DANGER. WE MUST HOPE THAT WE CAN REACH HER IN TIME.
WHAT KIND OF DANGER ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE? ANOTHER OF MY SISTER'S DEATH SQUADS?
I AM WORRIED, PRINCE FELIX. A NEW EVIL STALKS TTEREVE. MORE THAN THAT I DO NOT KNOW. ONLY THAT WE MUST FIND ROSE.

ILA...I HATE TO ASK, BUT IF DRUCILLA HAS THE KHAT, HOW DO WE EVEN KNOW THIS GIRL IS STILL ALIVE?
I MEAN, EVERYTHING I'VE EVER READ SAYS THAT ONLY *DEATH* CAN SEPARATE A KHAT FROM HIS GUARDIAN.
SOMETIMES, ARTUS, FAITH MEANS YOU MUST BELIEVE IN THINGS YOU CANNOT SEE...
...THINGS YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND.
SHE *IS* ALIVE. FOR NOW.

ZZZZZZZZZZZZ

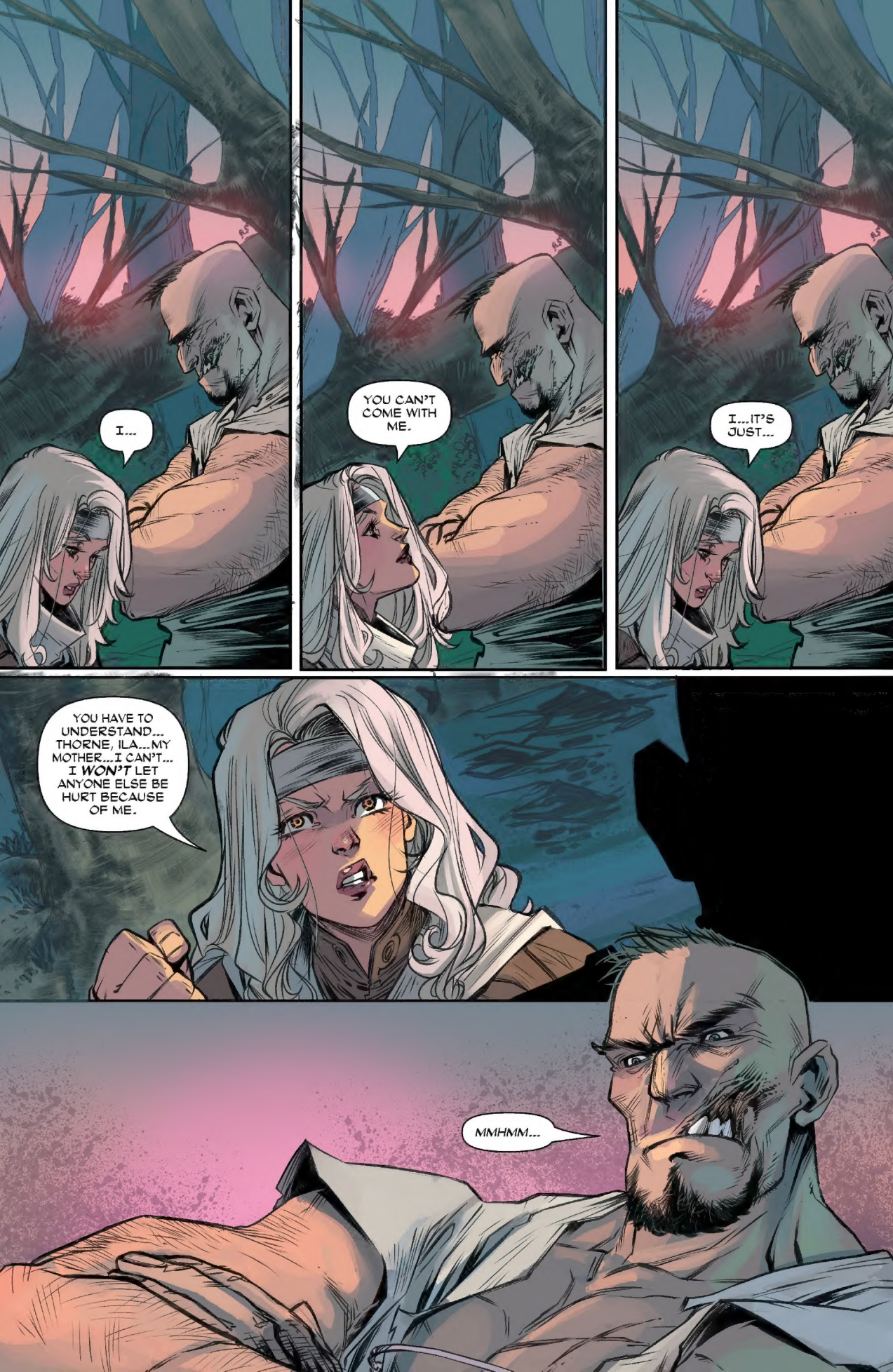
SIMON? PSSTT ARE YOU AWAKE?

I'M SORRY, SIMON.

I HOPE YOU CAN FORGIVE ME.

BUT I'M NOT GOING TO LOSE ONE MORE--

GOING SOMEWHERE, ROSE?


I...
YOU CAN'T COME WITH ME.
I...IT'S JUST...
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND... THORNE, ILA...MY MOTHER...I CAN'T... I *WON'T* LET ANYONE ELSE BE HURT BECAUSE OF ME.
MMHMM...

AND...AND I KNOW HOW MUCH DRUCILLA MEANS...OR... MEANT TO YOU.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AND I CAN'T... I WON'T PUT YOU IN THE POSITION OF HAVING TO CHOOSE BETWEEN YOUR VOW TO ME AND YOUR FEELINGS FOR HER.
ARE YOU DONE?
YES. THANK YOU FOR UNDERSTANDING. FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE FOR ME.
GOOD. WE'LL LEAVE WHEN YOU'RE READY.

MAYBE YOU DIDN'T HEAR ME!
I JUST TOLD YOU, YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH ME.
AND I'M TELLING YOU THAT I MADE A VOW TO PROTECT YOU TO THE DEATH, AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M GOING TO DO.
THEN I RELEASE YOU FROM YOUR VOW.
IT DOESN'T WORK LIKE THAT, ROSE.
I DON'T ASK YOU TO BE LESS THAN YOU ARE. STOP ASKING IT OF ME!
PLEASE! YOU HAVE TO... YOU HAVE TO LET ME GO!
YOU HEARD THE GIRL. LET HER GO.
PRINCE FELIX.

DID MY SISTER UNDERMINE YOUR MANHOOD SO MUCH THAT THE ONLY WAY LEFT FOR YOU TO REDEEM YOUR COWARDICE IS BY INTIMIDATING LITTLE GIRLS, DANTE?
>GASP< ILA!

GET BEHIND ME.
BUT, SIMON... THAT'S ILA!
THEN ILA IS KEEPING COMPANY WITH A MURDERER.
SAYS THE MAN WHO SPENT THE LAST TEN YEARS MURDERING INNOCENTS FOR THE LOVE OF MY BLOOD-CRAZED SISTER.
EVEN NOW, AFTER EVERYTHING SHE HAS DONE, HOW CAN YOU CONTINUE TO BELIEVE I COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF MY FATHER AND BROTHERS?
ONCE THE FOOL, ALWAYS THE FOOL, I GUESS.
UNLIKE YOU, I HAVE NEVER PRETENDED TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN WHAT I AM.

SIMON, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? PLEASE! WE'RE ALL ON THE SAME SIDE.
STAY OUT OF THIS, ROSE. THIS IS BETWEEN ME AND THE PRINCE.
ARRRHHHH!

ILA, YOU HAVE TO STOP THEM! SIMON'S NOT THE ENEMY. HE'S MY FRIEND!
I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING ALL THAT HAS TRANSPIRED SINCE WE WERE LAST TOGETHER, MY DEAR.
I HAD HOPED THAT YOU WOULD FIND THE KHAT BEFORE DRUCILLA, BUT DO NOT WORRY, ALL IS NOT LOST YET.
GRIER'S DEATH IS ON HIS HANDS. PERHAPS YOUR MOTHER'S IS ALSO.
NO. IT IS LONG PAST TIME HE IS HELD TO ACCOUNT FOR HIS SINS.

YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT? THAT I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHO AND WHAT HE WAS?
I AM NOT THE CHILD YOU KNEW IN MILLHAVEN, FOCUSED ON REVENGE.
I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE RITUAL OF ILLUMINATION. I'M A GUARDIAN NOW! AND, A GUARDIAN SERVES THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE!
SIMON ASKED FOR FORGIVENESS. TO DENY HIM WOULD HAVE BEEN TO TURN MY BACK ON WHAT I AM! WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO BE!
I WON'T DENY WHO AND WHAT I AM. IF YOU WON'T STOP THEM... I WILL.
ROSE! NO! YOU'LL BE...

ENOUGH!!

SWIIIIISH
WHAT IN THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, ROSE? TRYING TO GET YOURSELF KILLED?
TO THROW YOURSELF AWAY FOR NO REASON OTHER THAN EGO AND PRIDE IS SELFISH!
IT'S SOMETHING DRUCILLA WOULD HAVE ASKED OF YOU!
THERE ARE SOME DESTINIES YOU CAN'T CHANGE.
IF THAT WAS TRUE YOU WOULD HAVE TURNED ME OVER TO DRUCILLA THE FIRST DAY WE MET.

TO THE DEATH! THAT'S WHAT YOU PROMISED ME!
ROSE, I...
ROSE!
UUHHHHHH...
DON'T WORRY, LITTLE ONE. I'VE GOT YOU.

STRENGTH TAKES MANY FORMS.
THEY... COME.
NNNGGGGGHH...
THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANYTHING *PHYSICALLY* WRONG WITH HER.
SHE WAS FOOL TO JUMP INTO THE MIDDLE OF A SWORD FIGHT LIKE THAT. SHE COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED.
UHHH... WHAT'S SHE TALKING ABOUT? WHO'S COMING?
THERE! IN THE TREES!

GIVE US THE GIRL!
SRRNOWL!
ARTUS! GET ROSE OUT OF HERE! NOW!
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THESE...
CRACKKOWW
COME ON. WE'VE GOTTA GO--
NO! I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE! THIS IS MY FIGHT!

IT WOULD SEEM THAT, FOR NOW, WE HAVE A COMMON GOAL, KNIGHT.
YOU CANNOT HOPE TO STAND AGAINST THE POWER OF THREE GUARDIANS.
BE GONE, DEMON. YOU BETRAYED ANY POWER YOU HELD OVER THIS LAND, LONG AGO.
DEATH CORRUPTS, BUT THE POWER OF A GUARDIAN IS ETERNAL.
ILA! WATCH OUT!
NEXT MONTH: THE BIRTH OF EVIL

NEXT MONTH

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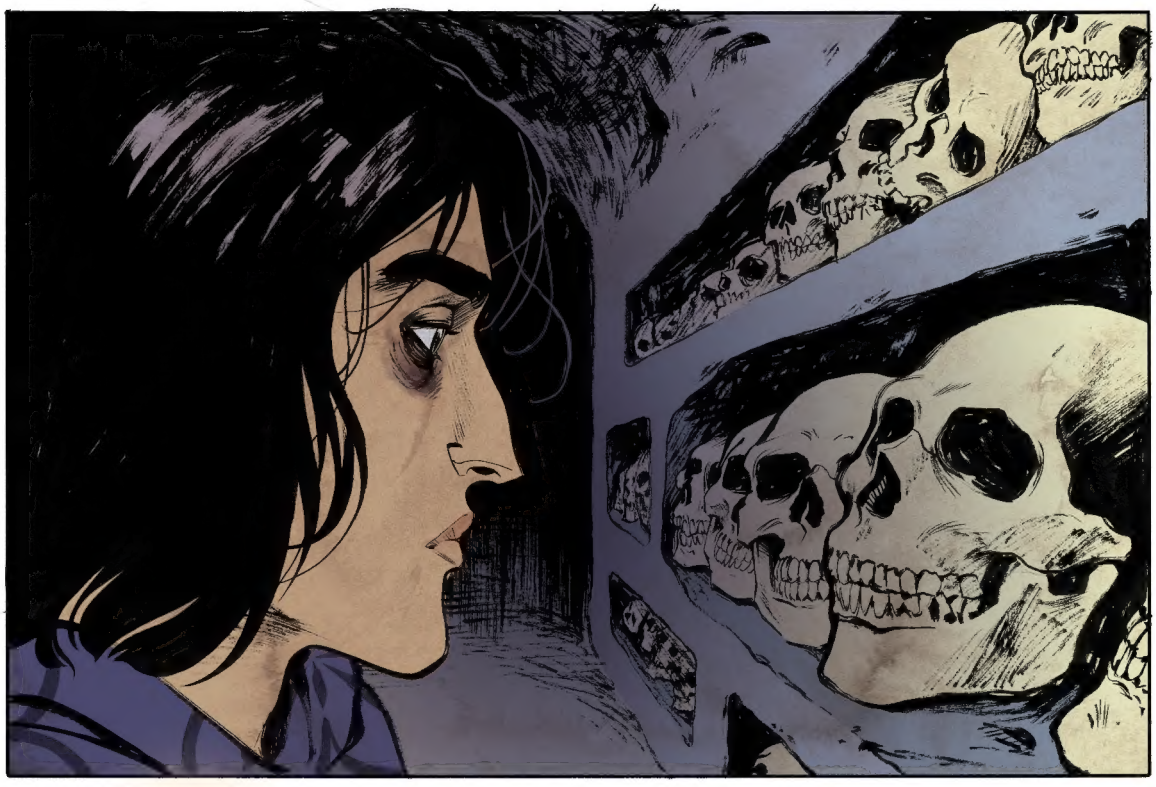

FATHER, GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO MAKE IT THROUGH THIS DAY, AND GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO FALL ASLEEP TONIGHT.
MY LADY.

Continued in
SLEEPLESS VOL 1
July 2018

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